S P E C I F I C A T I O N

Docket No. 92-C-74

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT KNOWN that I, Frank Randolph Bryant, citizen of the United States of America, residing in the State of Texas, have invented new and useful improvements in a

TRANSISTOR STRUCTURE AND METHOD FOR MAKING SAME

of which the following is a specification:

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention:

The present invention relates to integrated circuit devices and more specifically to field effect devices such as field effect transistors (FET) for use in integrated circuits.

2. Description of the Prior Art:

In manufacturing transistors, re-oxidation has been used in 5 μm to 1.2 μm technologies to improve transistor lifetimes and gate oxide reliability due to higher fields occurring at the etched polysilicon transistor edges. For example, U.S. Patent No. 4,553,314 teaches using re-oxidation to manufacture semiconductor devices. Typically, 3 μm and 5 μm technologies use re-oxidation thicknesses from about 1200 Å to about 2500 Å depending on the particular device. In 1.5 μm and 2 μm technologies, re-oxidation thicknesses from about 500 Å to about 1,000 Å are used.

In 0.8 μm technology, however, the re-oxidation process has been discontinued because the lifetimes of transistors currently manufactured without the re-oxidation process is better than with the re-oxidation process. Such a situation is caused by the formation of asperities on the underside of the polysilicon layer of the transistor during the re-oxidation process. These asperities are of little importance until the gate oxide thicknesses are reduced to below 200 Å as used in submicron technology. At this point, the asperities become a contributor to the increased field at the transistor edge and of hot carrier injection (HCI). These asperities are caused by (1) oxidant diffusion along polysilicon grain boundaries creating single crystal silicon protrusions and (2) oxide thicknesses under the polysilicon edge increasing during re-oxidation, causing polysilicon grain boundary slip to

occur and creating multiple edges, which results in an overall increase in angle geometries.

In addition, moving to device geometries below 0.8 μm technology has resulted in marginal lifetimes of the transistors. Thus, it is desirable to have a gate structure that has an increased lifetime using re-oxidation under the gate edge but without the asperities caused by presently used re-oxidation processes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a gate structure in a transistor and method for fabricating the structure. A gate structure is formed on a substrate. The gate structure includes three layers: an oxide layer, a nitride layer and a polysilicon layer. The oxide layer is located on the substrate, the nitride layer is located on the oxide layer, and the polysilicon layer is located on the nitride layer. The gate structure is reoxidized to form a layer of oxide over the gate structure. The nitride layer prevents the formation of asperities on the underside of the polysilicon layer during reoxidation of the transistor.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features believed characteristic of the invention are set forth in the appended claims. The invention itself however, as well as a preferred mode of use, and further objects and advantages thereof, will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figures 1-4 illustrate cross-sections of a portion of a semiconductor device during fabrication;

Figure 5 illustrates a cross-section of a semiconductor device;

Figure 6 illustrates a semiconductor device after reoxidation;

Figures 7A-7C depict an enlarged view of the cross-section shown in **Figure 5**;

Figure 8 illustrates an enlarged view of a cross-section from **Figure 6**;

Figures 9-10 illustrate cross-sections of a portion of a semiconductor device during an implantation process;

Figure 11 depicts a cross-section of a semiconductor device after reoxidation and implantation of the source and drain regions; and

Figure 12 is a graph of current injection for two semiconductor devices.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The process steps and structures described below do not form a complete process flow for manufacturing integrated circuits. The present invention can be practiced in conjunction with integrated circuit fabrication techniques currently used in the art, and only so much of the commonly practiced process steps are included as are necessary for an understanding of the present invention. The figures representing cross-sections of portions of an integrated circuit during fabrication are not drawn to scale, but instead are drawn so as to illustrate the important features of the invention.

The present invention allows for the use of re-oxidation to improve transistor lifetimes by reducing fields in transistor technologies through elimination of previous limitations. According to the present invention, a structure is provided which uses the increased distance at the gate edge, but eliminates the asperities created during re-oxidation so that re-oxidation may be used for submicron technologies. The structure of the present invention prevents the effects of oxidation on the polysilicon gate by using a thin silicon nitride layer located between the polysilicon and the gate oxide in a transistor.

Referring now to Figure 1, a schematic cross-section of a semiconductor device at an early stage in a manufacturing process is illustrated according to the present invention. Transistor 10 includes a substrate 12, which is typically a monocrystalline silicon of a conventional crystal orientation known in the art. Many features of the present invention are applicable to devices employing semiconductor materials other than silicon as will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art. Substrate 12 may be either a p-type substrate or an n-type

substrate. In the present illustrative example, a p-type substrate is employed. As can be seen with reference to **Figure 1**, field oxides **14a** and **14b** have already been created in transistor **10**.

In **Figure 2**, oxide layer **16**, also called an insulating oxide layer or a gate oxide layer, is grown on surface **18** of substrate **12** in transistor **10**. Thereafter, in **Figure 3**, a silicon nitride layer **20** is deposited on top of oxide layer **16** and field oxide **14a** and **14b**. Silicon nitride layer **20** is deposited on transistor **10** in a layer that is preferably from about 10 Å to about 50 Å thick according to the present invention.

Thereafter, a polycrystalline silicon (polysilicon) layer **22** is deposited over silicon nitride layer **20** as illustrated in **Figure 4**. Alternatively, a refractory metal, such as Mo, Ta, or W, or a metal silicide, such as $MoSi_2$ $TaSi_2$ or WSi_2, may be used. Transistor **10** is then patterned and etched to expose surface **18** in selected portions of transistor **10** as illustrated in **Figure 5** wherein a gate structure **21** for transistor **10** is formed. Next, re-oxidation is performed to produce oxide layer **26** covering the gate structure and the substrate, as illustrated in **Figure 6**. Typically, in reoxidation, the exposed substrate and the gate structure are exposed to an oxidizing ambient. Such a process is well known to those skilled in the art. Also, oxide layer **26** produced by reoxidation is preferably from about 25 Å to about 500 Å thick on the p-type substrate.

Referring now to **Figure 7**, an enlarged view of a representative portion of **Figure 5** is depicted. The figure shows in greater detail a portion of gate **21**. As can be seen, polysilicon layer **22**, nitride layer **20**, and oxide layer **16** have been etched away to expose surface **18** of substrate **12**. Alternatively, oxide layer **16** may be left in

its entirety as illustrated in Figure 7B, or partially etched away as illustrated in Figure 7C.

Now referring to Figure 8, an enlarged view of transistor 10 from Figure 6 is depicted. This enlarged view shows oxide layer 26 as grown during reoxidation of transistor 10. The reoxidation process which results in the growth of oxide layer 26 has the effect of moving peripheral edge 40 of polysilicon layer 22 in gate structure 21, as illustrated in Figure 8. The position of the peripheral edge of gate structure 21 in polysilicon layer 22 is indicated by the dashed line 40'. In addition, the growth of oxide layer 26 moves surface 18 downward from its original position 18' to form an indentation 19 (the section of oxide from original position 18' to surface 18) in surface 18 of substrate 12 near the peripheral edge of gate structure 21. Also, nitride layer 20 has an uplift 20a caused by reoxidation of the transistor.

The reoxidation process is well to those skilled in the art. Various temperatures and times may be may be used depending on the oxidizing ambient employed. For example, the transistor may be exposed to an oxidizing ambient such as dilute steam at a temperature from about 650°C to about 900°C from about 10 minutes to about 60 minutes.

Nitride layer 20 acts as a protective layer and prevents the formation of asperities in polysilicon layer 22 in gate structure 21 during reoxidation. Nitride layer 20 prevents oxidation of the bottom side of the polysilicon layer 22 and prevents formation of geometries which result in increased electric fields. In addition, the nitride layer will prevent outdiffusion of polysilicon dopants into the gate oxide, which if excessive can lead to early gate break downs. Such a feature is important especially when polysilicon dopants such as boron are used in large amounts. Moreover the higher density silicon nitride

increases resistance of the gate oxide to physical damage during post gate oxide and polysilicon deposition silicidations.

Although the process depicted in Figures 1-4 deposits silicon nitride onto the gate oxide layer, other processes may be employed to create a silicon nitride layer between gate oxide layer 16 and the polysilicon layer 22. For example, a nitrogen (N_2) implant into the polysilicon followed by annealing the device forms a thin silicon nitride layer at the polysilicon oxide interface. More information on forming thin silicon nitride layers may be found in an article by Josquih et al., "The Oxidation Inhibition in Nitrogen Implanted Silicon", J. Electrochem. Soc: SOLID-STATE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (August 1982) pp. 1803-1811 and in United States Patent No. 5,250,456.

When nitrogen implantation is used to form a silicon nitride layer, polysilicon layer 22 is deposited over oxide layer 16 as illustrated in Figure 9. Thereafter, nitrogen ions are implanted into transistor 10 as illustrated in Figure 10. In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, $^{15}N_2+$ at a dose in the range of about 1E14 to 1E16 ions/cm^2. Thereafter, transistor 10 is annealed at a temperature from about 800°C to about 1100°C inert ambient gas, such as argon or helium, for about 15 minutes to 60 minutes. As a result, a nitride layer 20 as illustrated in Figure 4 results from the annealing process. Nitride layer 20 is formed in a layer from about 15 Å to about 20 Å thick. Alternatively, transistor 10 may be annealed using rapid thermal processing in an inert ambient gas at about 900°C to about 1200°C for a period of time from about 5 seconds to about 3 minutes.

The anneal of the nitrogen-implanted polysilicon overlying oxide layer 16 causes the implanted nitrogen to accumulate at the polysilicon/oxide interface, forming a

nitride layer. Thereafter, transistor 10 is patterned and etched as illustrated in Figure 5 and re-oxidized as shown in Figure 6.

Alternatively, silicon nitride layer 20 may be formed on top of oxide layer 16, as illustrated in Figure 3, using a rapid thermal anneal process. For example, N_2 or NH_3 may be employed in a rapid thermal anneal process at a temperature from about 700°C to about 1200°C for a period of time from about 10 seconds to about 300 seconds to form a silicon nitride layer.

Implantation to produce source and drains for transistor 10 may performed after the re-oxidation procedure as illustrated in Figure 11. For example, n-type impurities may be implanted into a p-type substrate. The source/drain regions 30a and 30b are n-type active regions. Lightly doped drain (LDD) regions 32a and 32b are defined using sidewall oxide spacers 36a and 36b as known by those skilled in the art. The processing employed to produce the additional structures described in Figure 10 after reoxidation are well known to those skilled in the art. Alternatively, LDDs 32a and 32b and sidewall spacers 36a and 36b may be omitted according to the present invention.

Referring now to Figure 12, a graph of current injection for two semiconductor devices is depicted. The graph is of injection current, IG, for different voltages. IG currents for a first semiconductor without a nitride layer located between the polysilicon gate and the gate oxide is represented by line 1. IG currents for a second semiconductor device including a nitride layer between the polysilicon and gate oxide is represented by line 2. As can be seen from the graph in Figure 12, the early rise currents are reduced in line 2. The two semiconductor devices are both n-channel transistors with oxide spacers. The two devices have a 0.7 μm wide gate finger structure

and area of about $2e^4$ μm^2. Both devices under went reoxidation using 15 O_2 at 800°C. The second device has a nitride layer that is 10 Å. Otherwise the first and second devices are substantially identical. The nitride layer in the second semiconductor device represented in line 2 was created by silicon nitride deposition using a 30 minute deposition time at 750°C. The second semiconductor device was exposed to dichlorosilane ($SiCl_2H_2$) and ammonia (NH_3) in a ratio of 1 part dichlorosilane to 10 parts ammonia.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to a preferred embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.